Pessimism and Optimism as to Russia

IT would be difficult to find two books devoted to the same general subject so vastly different as Dr. E. J. Dillon's *The Eclipse of Russia* and Edward Alsworth Ross's *Russia in Upheaval*. Moreover the books are astonishingly frank revelations of the personalities of the men who wrote them.

Dr. Dillon's text reveals the British journalist to whom the personal pronoun is of prime importance, the man who knows his subject down to the ground and yet is so overburdened with his knowledge that his text verges on the incoherent. It reveals the man weary of his subject and perhaps made doubly pessimistic owing to his country's refusal to consult him and take advantage of his knowledge of Russia in its diplomatic interchanges with that country.

Dr. Ross, on the other hand, is the trained sociologist first, a good reporter next, and a man brimming over with enthusiasm for his chief aim in writing his book—that is, to find something good in Russia in spite of its present distressful condition. Finally, Dr. Dillon writes of what is dead and gone; Prof. Ross of what is living and present.

Is Russia Incomprehensible?

Dr. Dillon's chief contention that "Russia is a cryptic volume to Slav nations, and to Britons a book with seven seals." One gathers that the writer knows the Russian mind and character even if his compatriots do not, and this he surely should owing to his knowledge of the language and his many years of residence in the country. And from this knowledge he discusses *The Russian Enigma, The Russian Mind* and *Lack of Russian Unity* with a profusion of unilluminating footnotes that are one of the unmitigated bores of his text.

He also indulges in affectations such as always referring to the country and the government as the "Tsardom," the history of which, so far as this work is concerned, begins with the advent of Nicholas II., although the Russia that ended with the revolution of March, 1917, began ages before the day of the second Nicholas. He describes the beginnings of the revolutionary movement of 1905; devotes a chapter to Father Gapon and Azeef (which contains little that is new yet reads like an old fashioned Nihilist novel); and another to Rasputin, whom he interprets as a "symbol—of Russia's decadent bestiality we may assume.

Little New, Much That's Dull

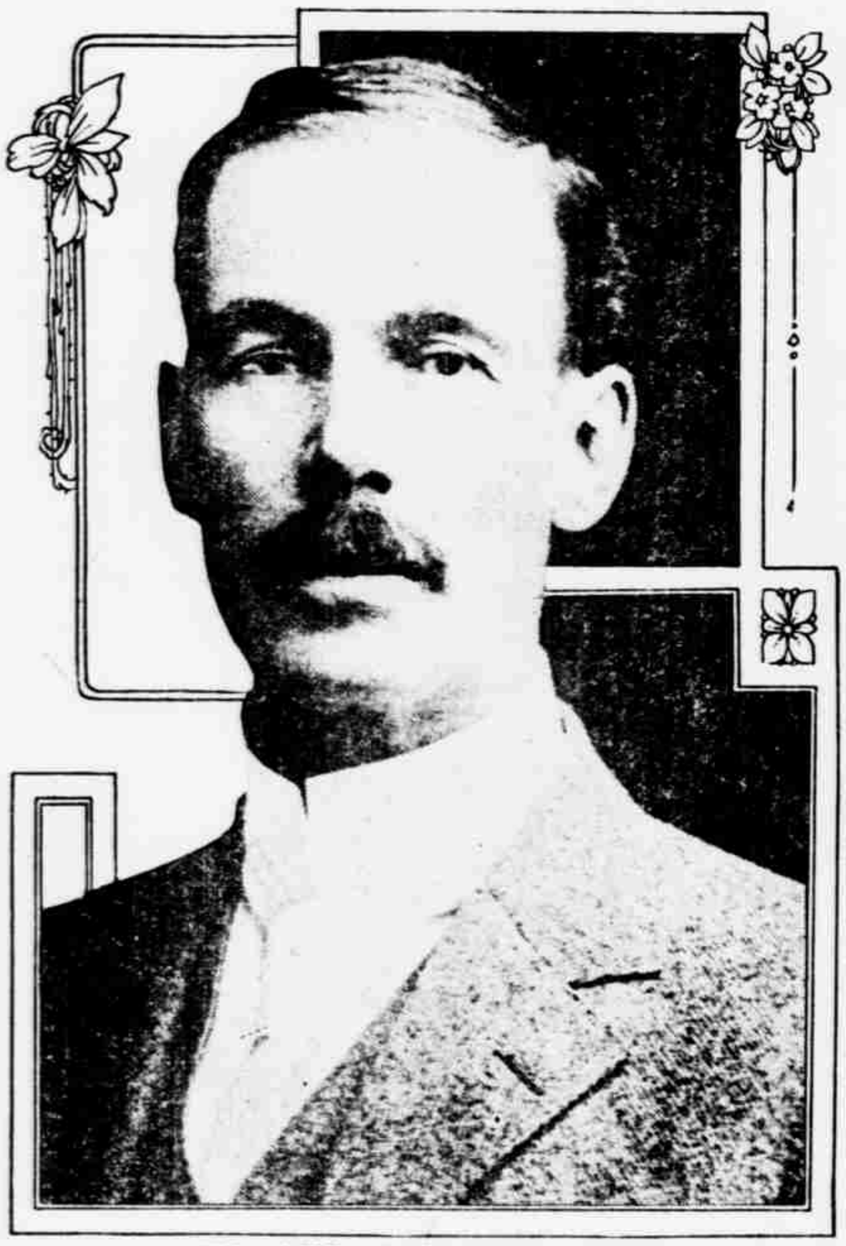
In his chapter on Russia's international relations Dillon tells a story of a plot to seize the heights of the upper Bosporus that was worked out by the last Czar and which we do not recall seeing in print before, yet it throws no new light on Russian diplomacy since it is so thoroughly characteristic. What amounts to four chapters are devoted to the secret treaty of Björke, revealed in the "Willy-Nicky" correspondence, that for deadly dulness would be hard to equal in any historical work we know. The chapter on *The Downfall of the Tsardom* is more concerned with giving extracts from what Dr. Dillon wrote in the *Contemporary Review* in 1905 and 1906 than in making that record of the events of March, 1917, which the reader might be led to expect from the chapter heading.

One of the most striking features of this book as a whole is that its most entertaining and rewarding passages are not about Russia at all but the glimpses it gives the reader of the Emperor William as an international political knave whose ethics would make a Philadelphia ward leader blush.

Skip Ross's Preface!

Prof. Ross begins his preface—fortunately most people skip prefaces—with the statement that "scientific objectivity" has been his guiding star in writing his book. In this preface one reads the cool and refreshing statement that while he might have presented the impression "that the Russians are fools or madmen" he preferred to picture them as he found them, "behaving much as I should were I in their place and furnished with their experience."

Prof. Ross, we may remind our readers, is one of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin and never has been guilty of "doing a Scott Nearing." Skipping the preface, then, we come to a most delightfully entertaining book of travels, describing a journey across Siberia and Russia from the east, down the Volga, over the Caucasus into Georgia and Armenia, with a side trip into Transcaucasia.



EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS
Author of "Russia in Upheaval."

The Marvel of Turkestan.

For picturesqueness the Metropolitan Opera House never equalled Prof. Ross's sketch of the manner in which the Georgians revived the office of Katholikos on a certain Sunday during his journey. For a contrast to Dr. Dillon's pessimism about the old Russia we refer our readers to this writer's description of the manner in which the Government of the last Czar turned a desert in Turkestan into a quarter of a million acres of fertile land with electric lights, cotton gins and presses and mills, with an experiment station, running the Central Asiatic Railway 1,200 miles "into the former abode of robbery, misgovernment and fanaticism." And all of this now governed by a twenty-year-old commissioner set over it by the Provisional Government in April, 1917, who has made the people of that land love him by his administration of justice! It is also surprising to learn from Prof. Ross, who is a traveller in many lands, that when he made the double journey from the Pacific to Petrograd and back again last year he found the Trans-Siberian Railroad in as good physical condition as our own Pennsylvania system.

More Than a Travel Book.

Interesting as are these travel pages of the writer, even more so are his chapters on the Russian people, on *Soil Hunger and the Land Question*, and on the causes leading up to the revolution of March, his history of that momentous event being singularly clear and comprehensive. In fact we know of no other place where it is so admirably recorded. Another striking chapter is that on *Russian Women and Their Outlook*, which is not only very sympathetic but rich in information as to the character of the modern Russian woman of the intellectual class with whom the future of the land must be much concerned.

The crux of Professor Ross's observations of the present and deductions as to what is to be the outcome of the upheaval is to be found in the chapter on *The United States of Russia*. In spite of the fact that few Russians have an idea of what a Federal union would mean, this author sees in that form of government the only possible solution of the present disorder. The people of the various races, he says, "may remember that a true state is by definition a peace area, and that by breaking up Russia they run the risk of reintroducing strife into the abode of peace." Yet he does not blink the other possibility, for he writes: "If such considerations do not prevail, but instead a number of self-willed little sovereignties take the place of the Russian Empire, there will presently be war between some of these new States and the people will look back with regret on the vanished peace of the Czar."

It is to be regretted that Professor Ross marred his pages with his final paragraphs on labor conditions in this country and on "the silent, unnoted pressure of capital," which have no just place in such a work. The many illustrations add to the interest of the book and are not at all of the familiar Russian travel book type.

THE ECLIPSE OF RUSSIA. By E. J. DILLON. George H. Doran Company. $4.

RUSSIA IN UPHEAVAL. By EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS. The Century Company. $2.50.

Stephen Graham's "The Quest of the Face"

HIMSELF very much of a wanderer, chiefly in Russia, Stephen Graham during the last ten years has been known to his readers in England and America always as the companion of wanderers. Sometimes they are fugitives fleeing to Jerusalem and sometimes poor immigrants travelling to America, and they are generally Russians.

We fancy that the section of the book before us entitled *The Shadow*, in which Saxby, a young man securely established in a London civil office, gives up his position of assured comfort for a roving life, throwing away, as his friends warn him, the substance for the shadow, is somewhat autobiographical. But all of Mr. Graham's writings, in magazine articles and books, are records of this sacrifice of substance for shadow in wanderings that become quests prompted by a spiritual passion. And the shadow is cherished more and more as each quest penetrates further beneath the surface.

The first section, which occupies nearly one-half of this book of Graham's last writings before he entered the war and gives the book its title, *The Quest of the Face* (i. e., the face of Christ), imparts a profound spiritual message. It is simply the essence of the Gospel message, but so revived as specially to appeal to readers in these days of the world's travail.

Some readers may get more pleasure and satisfaction from the brief additional sections, all complementary to the first, though independently written. These are concretely embodied, each taking the form of a story. The second section, *The Immortal*, the story of a man who by drinking a certain elixir becomes immune to death, is particularly original and impressive. This man in giving up mortality surrenders also all mortal desires and pleasures, and, unable even to relish social contact with his kind, ceases in effect to be man.

This story of *The Immortal* has so intimate an association with the main theme of the book as to be essentially a part of it. The author's words preparatory to this section are significant of the association. "Because we all die we can understand our unity—our being one flesh and one spirit. We can love. It is the look of mortality in the eyes that beckons us to love one another. To seek to be perpetuated as we are is the opposite of seeking Christ. He lives the best who is always ready to die."

Thus in the author's searching of human faces to find a likeness to the ideal face of Christ the first hopeful glimpse he has is in looking upon one dead. Thereafter his quest turns toward the weak, the decadent, the despised and rejected of men. It is only after Dushan, a Serb, enters upon the scene, stepping unbidden from the crowd, more seeking than sought, that Stephen Graham, using this Slav as a medium, plainly delivers his message. It proves to be a sympathetic interpretation of the Gospel before it was Westernized, yet in terms adapted to the most advanced spiritual comprehension of Western Christendom. It is Tolstoyan but wholly original in its expression.

THE QUEST OF THE FACE. By STEPHEN GRAHAM. The Macmillan Company. $1.75.

The increasing demand for Admiral Alfred T. Mahan's writings since America entered the war has led his publishers, Little, Brown & Co., to arrange for a volume of selections of his teachings on sea power and naval strategy which they will publish in August, under the title of *Mahan on Naval Warfare*. The editor, Allan Westcott of the United States Naval Academy, will supply a biographical introduction.

In the organization and direction of their energies, especially of the younger women and girls, help will be found in Helen J. Ferris's *Girls' Clubs, Their Organization and Management*, which E. P. Dutton & Co. have ready.